

THE WEAVERS OF BRADFORD, THEIR WORK AND WAGES

ON re-reading lately Mr. J. B. Firth's article on 'The Weavers of Bradford, their Work and Wages' (*Economic Journal*, September, 1892), I felt that there were other points of interest in the subject besides those which were therein treated, and also that there were some aspects of the subject to which, perhaps, fuller justice could be done by some one engaged in the trade.

The large dimensions of the trade of weaving, and the special characteristics by which it is marked, make the facts connected with the industry worthy of consideration by those interested in economic subjects, either historically or practically.

One of the characteristics of weaving is that it is, and always has been, a piecework industry, both in the old handloom days and since the introduction of machinery. Another feature is that it is an occupation which has been handed over from one sex to the other. At the time of the introduction of the power loom weaving was man's work exclusively; now, with few exceptions (to be dealt with hereafter) it has been transferred to the province of woman's work. I am speaking here, of course, of the Bradford trade. Men are still employed upon carpets, tapestries, and other heavy work carried on in other districts. The conditions under which weavers pursue their calling, and the terms and remuneration of their services are also matters of interest.

With regard to the number of persons employed in the trade, there are no very recent statistics. The latest are contained in a Board of Trade return which gives the numbers in 1889 as being 126,879 persons employed in worsted factories in Yorkshire. Of these about 25,000 to 28,000 appear to be weavers, though the precise number is not given. This would make the weaver to be about one-fifth of the whole number. From the same return it appears that textile labour in worsted factories is distributed as follows:—

		Per Cent.	
Males	over 18 years	25	} Of whom probably two-thirds are weavers.
Females	„ 13	53	
Males	under 18	9	
„	„ 13	6	
Females	„ 13	7	
		<u>100</u>	

or roughly speaking 35 per cent. men and youths, 55 per cent. women and girls, and 10 per cent. children.